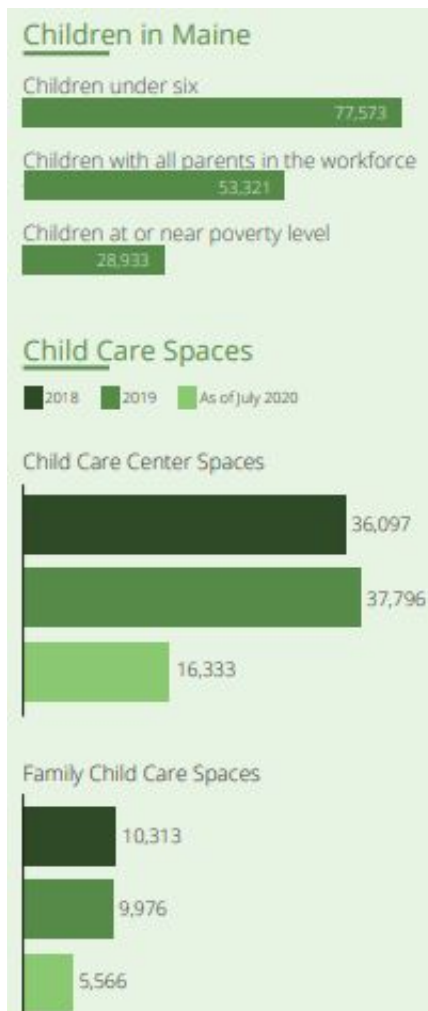




Testimony in Opposition to LD 98: “An Act To Clarify Maine's Statutes Related to the Licensing of Child Care Providers”

Senator Claxton, Representative Meyer, and the distinguished members of the Committee on Health and Human Services, my name is Nick Murray and I serve as policy analyst for Maine Policy Institute, a nonpartisan, non-profit organization that advocates for individual liberty and economic freedom in Maine. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in opposition to LD 98.



Child care is truly an essential service. Like education, it is foundational to Maine’s economy. When parents exit the workforce to care for their children, families in the U.S. lose \$28.9 billion in wages every year. A 10% decline in the availability of child care services corresponds with a reduction of employment among single mothers by 3-4% and up to 6% for married mothers.¹

Over the last decade or more, Maine parents have been frustrated with the lack of affordable child care, and for good reason. From 2008 to 2018, the state lost one-quarter of all licensed child care providers (below), with even steeper losses among family care providers. All 16 counties experienced at least a 20% drop, 11 had a drop of 35% or greater among family care.² Family child care is historically the most accessible and affordable option for Maine families, yet the actions of this Legislature continue to result in the closure of these facilities across the state.

The historical trend has only gotten worse over the last year, as more than half of Maine’s child care spaces closed by July 2020 (left).³

Subjecting family child care providers to “quality” regulations - an entirely subjective term that has no measurable impact on the interactions between children and providers - will only exacerbate this problem.

Fixing child care in Maine does not require throwing more borrowed money at the problem; it does not require more government oversight, programs or regulation. On the contrary, it requires empowering child care entrepreneurs to meet the needs of their communities.

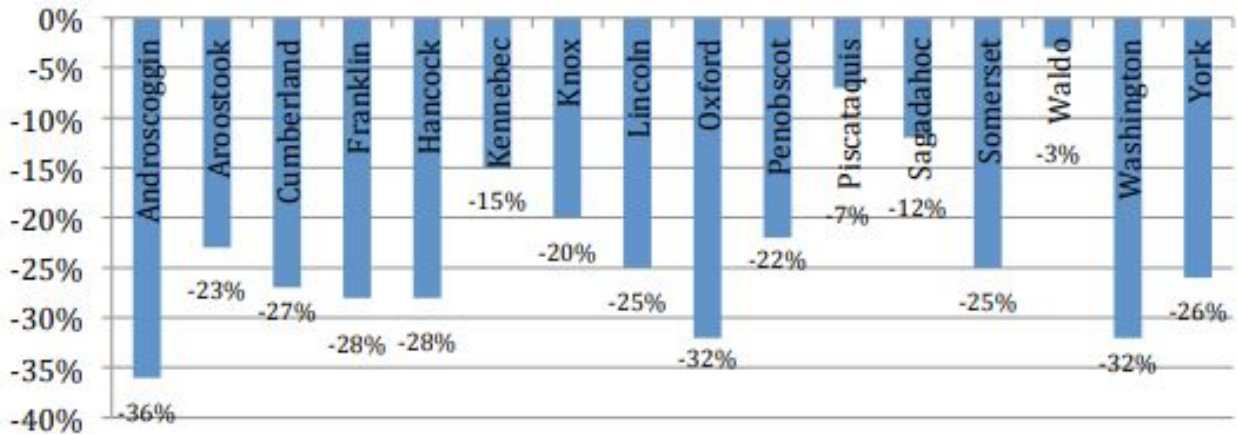
¹ [Parents and the High Cost of Child Care](#) | Child Care Aware of America, 2017

² [Increasing Child Care Choices](#) | Maine Policy Institute, February 2018

³ [2020 State Fact Sheet: Maine](#) | Child Care Aware

When the local parent down the road who has been caring for the neighborhood children for decades is no longer “qualified” to deliver these services, we have a real problem on our hands. For these reasons, I urge you to vote “ought not to pass” on LD 98 and instead seek reforms to Maine’s struggling child care sector that lower costs and reduce unnecessary barriers to success.

Decline in the total number of licensed Maine child care providers, 2008 to 2018



Source: Maine DHHS Office of Child and Family Services